

# Notable new bird records from the Philippines

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The most recent checklist of the birds of the Philippines published by the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines recognises 682 species, based on the International Ornithological Union World Bird List. This is a substantial increase from the 572 species recognised by Kennedy *et al.* (2000), owing in part to the progression of taxonomic knowledge which has resulted in many taxa being elevated to full species status. Six species new to science have also been described since 2000 and an additional 54 species presently considered to be accidental visitors have been observed and recorded; these are summarised here with supporting notes for species that have not previously been documented.

## INTRODUCTION

Our knowledge of the taxonomy and distribution of the Philippine avifauna is rapidly expanding as a consequence of more research and fieldwork by professional and amateur ornithologists. In addition to six species new to science—Calayan Rail *Gallirallus calayanensis*, Bukidnon Woodcock *Scolopax bukidnonensis*, Camiguin Hanging Parrot *Loriculus camiguinensis*, Cebu Hawk Owl *Ninox rumseyi*, Camiguin Hawk Owl *Ninox leventisi*, and Sierra Madre Ground Warbler *Robsonius thompsoni*—and many taxa elevated to full species status as a result of morphological, bioacoustic and/or phylogenetic studies (e.g. Collar 2006, 2011, Oliveros & Moyle 2010, Miranda *et al.* 2011, Moyle *et al.* 2011, Sánchez-González & Moyle 2011, Rasmussen *et al.* 2012, Schweitzer *et al.* 2012, Sheldon *et al.* 2012, Hosner *et al.* 2013), 54 species considered to be accidental visitors have been recorded for the first time in the Philippine archipelago since the publication of Kennedy *et al.* (2000).

The Wild Bird Club of the Philippines (WBCP) maintains a database of Philippine avifaunal records from its own members and other published sources. The *Checklist of the birds of the Philippines* (WBCP 2014) is based on the International Ornithological Union (IOC) World Bird List (Gill & Donsker 2014). R. S. Kennedy and THF introduced the concept of documentation of rare bird records to amateur ornithologists and birdwatchers in the Philippines, resulting in the establishment the WBCP Records and Rarities Committees. In the Philippines, species are defined as accidental visitors if there are fewer than 20 records; all such records are rigorously assessed by the WBCP Rarities Committee. All records of species new to the Philippines must be unanimously accepted by the committee members, currently Desmond Allen, Juan Carlos Tecson Gonzalez, ROH, AEJ and Steve Pryor. The assistance of other experts is also sought where required. THF was a member of the committee until his untimely death in 2010.

In all, 109 observers including the authors contributed to the records presented here and we thank the following for their important data: Vorawan Aksornsart (VA), Desmond Allen, Martin Alvendia, Ulrik Andersen, Rene Antonio (RA), Marie Theresa Aquino (MTA), Marie Kathleen Arce (MKA), Armado Bajarias (AB), Danilo Balete (DB), Arturo Baluyot Jr., Annabelle Barquilla (ABq), Mikael Bauer (MBa), Daniel Benders, Mark Bezuijen, Peter Bono, Val M. Borja (VMB), Paul Bourdin (PBo), Dan Brimmer (DBr), Nicanor Cabigas Jr., Melvyn Calderon, Des Cambiliza, Ding Carpio (DCa), Tere Cervero, Jimmy Chew (JC), Piyapong Chotipuntu (PC), Tony Clarke (TC), Adrian Constantino, Maria Katrina Constantino, Roger Costin (RC), Fergus Crystal (FC), Jaime Dichaves, Irene Dy (ID), Carmela Española, Carlos Gutiérrez Expósito (CGE), Robert Ferguson (RF), Ruth Fransisco, Paul French, Lu-Ann Fuentes (LF), Edgardo Garcellano, Harvey John Garcia, Simon Harrap, Morten Heegaard, Rolf Hennes (RH), Jon Hornbuckle (JH), Jessar Inocencio (JI), Godfrey Jakosalem, Chris Johns (CJ), Markus Lagerqvist (ML), Cynthia Adeline Layusa, Michaela Ledesma (MLe), Tan Ju Lin, Alexander Loinaz

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We present below details of 54 species recorded in the Philippines for the first time since the publication of Kennedy *et al.* (2000), or which were not included therein because the records had not then been published. Supporting notes and/or images are included for new records not previously published in peer-reviewed journals. In addition, details are given of subsequent records, if any, of these species, up to and including 1 January 2015, to add context to the sightings and for patterns of occurrence to be fully documented. The IUCN threat category is provided for species considered threatened (including Near Threatened) by BirdLife International (2015).

New records published in international journals and publications but not included or accepted in Kennedy *et al.* (2000) were also reassessed. However, a record of Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* (Collar *et al.* 1999) was not assessed because the original field notes could not be traced.

## ANNOTATED LIST OF NEW COUNTRY RECORDS

### Tundra Bean Goose *Anser (fabalis) serrirostris*

**27 March–10 April 2010:** one at Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (AL, CT), subsequently seen by many observers (Plate 1). The dark head and neck contrasting with paler grey-brown underparts, dark scalloping on the flanks and a black bill with distinct orange band eliminated confusion species. The IOC (Gill & Donsker 2014) currently recognise Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* and Tundra Bean Goose *A. serrirostris* as separate species. However, separation of *A. fabalis middendorffi* and *A. serrirostris serrirostris* has proved very difficult, sometimes impossible, in the field, even with exceptional views and photographic documentation (Nelson *et al.* 2013). The Philippines individual was identified as taxon *serrirostris* by a combination of the following features separating it from *A. fabalis middendorffi*: a heavy but very conical bill, lacking any concave area



or narrowing towards the tip, as shown by *middendorffi*, and a heavy lower mandible, convex near the base. The cutting edge of the upper mandible curved along its length where *middendorffi* would have a straighter cutting edge. The relatively short thick neck provided additional support for the identification (Oates 1997).

The above Bean Goose taxa are rare winter visitors to Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013) and their occurrence in the Philippines would not be unexpected.

#### **Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons***

**5 December 2010–11 January 2011:** fourteen individuals at Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (AL, CT) were subsequently seen by many observers. Distinguishing features from other *Anser* species included the wholly dull pink bill colour, lacking the dark markings of Tundra Bean Goose, and duller in colour than Greylag Goose *A. anser*, orange legs rather than the pink of *anser* and the black transverse lines on the belly of some adults, never shown by *serrirostris* or *anser*. The large size, long neck, lack of distinct yellow eye-ring and white forehead extending to the crown eliminated the smaller, more delicate Lesser White-fronted Goose *A. erythropus*.

Nine *Anser* geese on 11 October 2011 near Dianlupihan, Bataan, Luzon, were either *A. albifrons* or *A. erythropus* but specific identification was not possible.

The Philippine birds were considered most likely to be the larger, longer-billed subspecies *frontalis*, which breeds in Siberia from the River Kolyma east to Chukotka, wintering in east China, Japan and the Korean Peninsula; it is an occasional visitor to Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013) and winter occurrence in the Philippines is not surprising.

#### **Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus***

**7 February 2006:** two birds reported by local farmers at Barangay Buenavista, Virac, Catanduanes Island, Luzon. One was caught and handed to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Community Environment and Natural Resource Office (CENRO), Virac, where it remained in captivity until it died 21 January 2014 (EM *in litt.* 2012, pers. comm. 2014) (Plate 2). The extensive yellow patch on the base of the bill assigned the birds to subspecies *bewickii*.

One subsequent record: 10 February 2012, three individuals in a protected area at Cabusao, Camarines Sur, Luzon. One, an immature, was subsequently shot and wounded by a hunter. It was cared for by DENR, Sipocot, Camarines Sur, and later died in captivity (FS *in litt.* 2012).

Subspecies *bewickii*, a winter visitor to north-east and east China, the Korean Peninsula and Japan, is a vagrant in Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013); consequently records from the Philippines are not surprising.

#### **Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea***

**25 November 2001:** one seen Magat Dam, Isabela, Luzon (van Weerd & van der Ploeg 2004). The species winters widely from South Asia and Myanmar to south-east China and is locally common in south-west Korea, although a rare visitor in Japan and Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013). It is probably an annual visitor to Thailand (PDR *in litt.* 2014) and an occasional visitor to Indochina. An accidental record in the Philippines is not surprising.

Kennedy *et al.* (2000) did not accept a record of four birds shot and photographed by a hunter in Pangasinan, Luzon, during February or March 1994, and the November 2001 record therefore becomes the first accepted record from the Philippines.

#### **Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata***

**30 November–14 December 2013:** an adult male was found and photographed on fishponds near Barangay Gabu, Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Luzon (RR). There was no doubting the identification of

this distinctive species (Plate 3). Mandarin Ducks are often kept in wildfowl collections; however, this bird was not ringed, showed no sign of wing damage, flew strongly, and was very wary of humans, all factors supporting its wild origin. It was associating with a large flock of mainly Philippine Duck *Anas luzonica*, which also included the migratory Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope*, Northern Pintail *A. acuta*, Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata* and Eastern Spot-billed Duck *A. zonorhyncha*. A Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* was on the same ponds from 19 to 30 December 2013, only the second Philippine record. It is probable that the appearance of both species was caused by a high-pressure system bringing cold weather to north-east China and Japan, with associated strong winds across East Asia from Japan south-west to Taiwan and northern Luzon.

The Mandarin Duck is partially migratory, wintering in Japan, Korea (where it also breeds), south, central and south-east China (Carboneras & Kirwan 2015). In Taiwan, where it is resident, birds also occur as transient migrants (Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### **Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis* (Near Threatened)**

**10 January 2014:** an injured adult caught in Bibincahan, Sorsogon City, Luzon, was handed to Albay Parks and Wildlife Center, Legazpi City, where it died on 19 January 2014 (ABq, M. Baylon *in litt.* 2014). The species was identified from an image which showed a white cap, neck and underparts contrasting with dark brown upperparts, grey ear-coverts and cheeks, blackish lores and contrasting white eyelids (Plate 4). The combination of pinkish bill, a dark-grey tip and yellow base is characteristic of adult Laysan Albatross.

Outside the breeding season the species disperses over the North Pacific but is most numerous in the west, with large concentrations off east Japan. It is a vagrant to Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### **Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris***

**26 April 2012:** one photographed close inshore between San Isidro and Didadungan, Palanan, Isabela, Luzon (CJ). The main confusion species is Sooty Shearwater *A. grisea*, from which this individual was separated by broad and uniformly pale grey underwing, small slender bill, a small rounded head with a rather steep forehead and toes which extended beyond the tail-tip (Onley & Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009).

One subsequent confirmed record: 1 May 2013, an injured bird on Snake Island, Honda Bay, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, was taken into care by Rogelio Abison (DENR) but died shortly afterwards; the in-hand inspection of this individual also revealed a pale throat contrasting with the darker crown and ear-coverts, giving a 'hooded' appearance.

The species is a trans-equatorial migrant, breeding in the austral summer before a loop migration around the North Pacific, passing Japan between May and September—mostly in June. It is known to pass Taiwan and Korea in small numbers (Onley & Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013); the dates of occurrence of the two Philippine birds fit well with its known migration pattern.

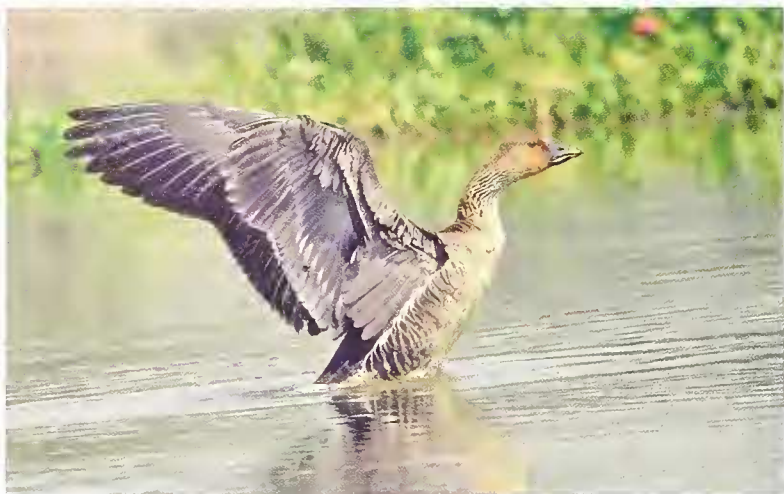
#### **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Hydrobates monorhis* (Near Threatened)**

**11 May 2013:** one individual observed and photographed at sea (9.136°N 119.614°E), 20 km west-north-west of Jessie Beazley Reef, Palawan (ROH, AEJ). The bird was identified by a combination of size, judged to be similar to Leach's Storm Petrel *H. leucorhous*, completely dark rump, shallower tail-fork than Leach's Storm Petrel, Tristram's Storm Petrel *H. tristrami* or Matsudaira's Storm Petrel *H. matsudairae*, and the uniformly dark upperwing pattern broken by a pale brown covert-bar and white flash at the bases of the primaries.

On 8 May 2008 two storm petrels with dark rumps seen between Cavili and Cagayancillo islands, Palawan, and another later the same day north of Calusa Island, Palawan, may also have been this species (AEJ).



ALEXANDER LOINAZ



**Plate 1.** Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*, Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon, 1 April 2010.



**Plate 2.** Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*, DENR CENRO Virac, Catanduanes, 24 April 2012.

EDITHA MILAN, DENR

SYLVIA AND TONJI RAMOS



**Plate 3.** Adult male Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, fishpond near Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Luzon, 18 December 2013.



**Plate 4.** Injured Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis*, Bibincahan, Sorsogon City, Luzon, 10 January 2014.

ANNABELLE BARQUILLA, DENR

ROMY OCON



**Plate 5.** Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, Talogtog, San Juan, La Union, 1 November 2014.



**Plate 6.** Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, International Rice Research Institute near Los Baños, Laguna, 10 October 2013.

PAUL BOURDIN

LYN TOLENTINO



**Plate 7.** White Tern *Gygis alba*, Romblon Island, Romblon, 18 September 2012.



**Plate 8.** Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*, Balanga, Bataan, Luzon, 4 February 2013.

ROBERT HUTCHINSON



ROBERT HUTCHINSON



**Plate 9.** Mew Gull *Canus canus*, Laoag River, Ilocos Norte, Luzon, 30 December 2013.



**Plate 10.** Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Tibsoc, Negros Occidental, 5 January 2014.

ROBERT HUTCHINSON

JIMMY CHEW



**Plate 11.** Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*, Aborlan, Palawan, 19 February 2011.



**Plate 12.** Immature Fairy Pitta *Pitta nympha*, Pandanan, Malinsuno Island, Balabac, Palawan, 30 September 2013.

RENE ANTONIO

JON HORNBUCKLE



**Plate 13.** Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Mount Mariveles watershed, Bataan, Luzon, 15 October 2015.



**Plate 14.** Adult Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*, Banca-Bancao, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, 26 June 2012.

EDGARDO GARCELLANO

ROMY OCON



**Plate 15.** A first-winter male Stejneger's Stonechat *Saxicola stejnegeri*, University of the Philippines campus, Diliman, Quezon City, Luzon, 19 November 2007.



**Plate 16.** Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*, Basco airfield, Batan Island, Batanes, 15 October 2013.

ROBERT HUTCHINSON



Swinhoe's Storm Petrel breeds on small islets off Japan, Korea and Taiwan, overwintering in the Indian Ocean (Onley & Scofield 2007). It is probably regular in Philippine waters and the paucity of records is due to limited pelagic exploration and the difficulties of identification at sea.

#### Leach's Storm Petrel *Hydrobates leucorhous*

**14 April 2004:** one bird landed on a catamaran between Busuanga and Mindoro (about 12.8°N 120.0°E) in the Philippine Sea (PSt), and was later released near Puerto Galera, Mindoro. Images showed a generally dark, rather large storm petrel with long, angular wings and a deeply forked tail. A narrow white rump-band, not extending to the rump-sides, had a dark dividing line thus forming two white oval patches. The rest of the plumage was mostly blackish-brown except for a prominent greyish carpal bar extending from the front leading edge, diagonally across the entire wing. The bill and legs, including webbing between the toes, were dark. The above features eliminated the possible confusion species, Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* and Band-rumped Storm Petrel *Hydrobates castro* (Onley & Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009).

The weather at the time was dominated by strong south-westerly monsoon winds (P. Stevens *in litt.* 2009). The nearest breeding grounds are the South Kuril Islands and south-east Hokkaido, Japan, and the species migrates to the equatorial Pacific Ocean (Onley & Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009), evidently wandering widely outside the breeding season. It is an accidental visitor to Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### Oriental Stork *Ciconia boyciana* (Endangered)

**15 April 1997:** an adult photographed at Maconacon, Isabela, Luzon by F. Danielsen (Collar *et al.* 1999). The image of the bird circling overhead showed a classic stork profile with long broad wings, long outstretched neck, and legs extending beyond the short tail. The clean white underparts, neck, tail and underwing-coverts, contrasting strongly with the black flight feathers, ruled out all confusion species except White Stork *C. ciconia*—eliminated by the black, rather than red or pink, bill.

Oriental Stork is a scarce winter visitor to Korea, Japan and south-east China, and a rare visitor to Taiwan (Brazil 2009).

#### Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

**30 December 2007–6 January 2008:** a single bird photographed at Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (TSM, WM), was later seen by others. It was distinguished from the similar Black-faced Spoonbill *P. minor* by the all-white forehead and cheeks and the facial skin colour. The dark bill with yellow markings in an arc around the tip of the 'spoon' on the underside and bright yellow throat-skin, combined with retained dusky tips to the primaries and outermost primary coverts, indicated the bird was probably in its third calendar year.

The species winters in south-east China, with small numbers in Korea and southern Japan, and occasionally visits Taiwan (Robson 2005, Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (Vulnerable)

**13–25 January 2009:** one observed and photographed at Lake Bito, MacArthur, Leyte, by Arnulito Viojan (DENR). The images (Custodio 2009) confirmed that it was an adult; specifically, the long, dark bill contrasting with a bright yellow-orange pouch eliminated Great White *P. onocrotalus* and Spot-billed Pelican *P. philippensis*. In 2005, the Dalmatian Pelican population in East Asia was no more than 130 birds (Batbayar *et al.* 2007) although it is recorded as a scarce winter visitor to south-east China, and an accidental visitor to Japan and Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013). The bird was considered to be of wild origin because the species is not known to occur in captive waterbird collections in the country.

#### Christmas Island Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi* (Critically Endangered)

**April–May 1995:** first record, an adult female and a juvenile photographed at Bancoran Island, Tawi-Tawi (Jensen & Tan 2010). Subsequent records to 2009, reviewed by Jensen & Tan (2010), produced a total of 161 individuals from the Sulu Sea, where the species appears to be a regular visitor with records of both immature and adult birds throughout the year.

Post-2009 records, also from the Sulu Sea, are: five in Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Palawan, from 8 to 10 May 2011 and one on 10 May 2012 (Jensen 2011, 2012). The only record not from the Sulu Sea was a juvenile inland at La Mesa Dam, Quezon City, Metro Manila, 22 January 2013.

#### Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (Near Threatened)

**8 September 2002:** a juvenile, found exhausted, was taken into care on Batan Island, Batanes, by Darwin Salamagos (van der Ploeg & Minter 2004). It died in captivity at the same locality in 2004 (M. Mendoza pers. comm. 2005).

#### Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

**1 November 2014:** one photographed (RO) in pastureland near Talogtog, San Juan, La Union, Luzon (Plate 5). The strong black streaking on the underparts and brownish-toned upperparts with rufous-buff fringing confirmed that the bird was a juvenile. The head pattern distinguished it from other juvenile falcons including Eurasian Hobby *F. subbuteo*, which lacks the yellow cere and eye-ring; the paler underwing with darker bar on the rear secondaries was likewise diagnostic.

Birds leave east Asian breeding grounds in late August or early September, and typically replenish fat reserves in north-east India (Sykes 2013) before crossing the Indian Ocean in late November and December (Dixon *et al.* 2011). This record from the Philippines is a significant deviation from the usual route, although several have been recorded on migration through Taiwan.

#### Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

**19 October 1999:** one bird on Ursula Island, Palawan (THF, RF). Detailed field notes described it in flight as a slim falcon with long scimitar-shaped wings and the underwings heavily barred. At rest, the white face contrasted with a black crown extending to the nape, and long, well-defined black moustachial stripes extending from the eye. The nape showed a small pale patch and there was a short white eye-brow. The bill was small and pale with a dark tip. Upperparts including wing-coverts and tail-coverts were brownish-black with buffy tips. The white underparts were heavily streaked black from breast to undertail, and the underwings were very densely speckled, giving the barred appearance. Absence of rufous colouration on the thighs, combined with pale tips to the upperwing-coverts, indicated that the bird was probably a first-year male showing a mixture of adult and juvenile features (Svensson *et al.* 1999, Brazil 2009). Juvenile Amur Falcon *F. amurensis* has a paler head with bright yellow skin at the nostrils, and a distinct black band at the trailing edge of the underwing secondaries; and was therefore ruled out.

Four subsequent records: 7 April 2004, two adults migrating north, Tanay, Rizal, Luzon; 17 October 2004, an adult migrating west, Bancauan Island, San Miguel Islands, Tawi-Tawi; 9 October 2013, an adult at Basco, Batan Island, Batanes, and 10 October 2013, an adult migrating south at Basco, Batan Island, Batanes.

An earlier sighting on Sabtang Island, Batanes, 30 September 1994, was believed by the observer (THF) to be this species but field notes failed to provide sufficient detail and it is considered unproven, given the potential confusion with Amur Falcon.

During southbound raptor migration from Taiwan, most birds make their next landfall on north Luzon (Tiongco *et al.* 2015). Between 2009 and 2013, in September and October, during 244



days' observation in south Taiwan, 75 Eurasian Hobbies were recorded. In contrast, only two Amur Falcons were noted in the same period (Asian Raptor Research & Conservation Network 2014). Therefore in the Philippines the Eurasian Hobby is probably a rare (and to date under-recorded) passage migrant and possible winter visitor.

#### **Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo***

**July 2008–June 2010:** three seen at Tugod, Calayan Island, by Conrado Duerme (Oliveros & Layusa 2010). Two disappeared in July 2008 at the time the third bird was caught. It was later released from captivity and remained in the area until killed by villagers in June 2010 (CP *in litt.* 2010). Accidental records of the species in Korea, Japan and Taiwan, including some between May and July (Brazil 2009), provide precedents for this occurrence.

#### **Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

**16 and 18 January 2000:** two adults in non-breeding plumage at Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (JM, RH, THF). They were described as large plovers with a short stout bill, rounded head with steep forehead, short neck and stocky body. Underparts white except for a broad black breast-band and orange-buff vent, upperparts dark with a green gloss, whitish face and throat with dark markings in front of and behind the eye, dark crown, ear-coverts, lower part of crown and nape orange-buff in colour. In flight broad, round-ended black wings with white-tipped outer primaries, underwing-coverts and rump white, tail black.

Two subsequent confirmed records: 30 November 2000, an adult and an immature, Naida Hills, Basco, Batanes, and 24–25 January 2012, an adult, Calayan Island, Babuyan Islands, Cagayan, Luzon.

The species's regular wintering grounds include south-east China, Korea and Japan, and it is a scarce visitor to Taiwan (Brazil 2009).

#### **Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii***

**20 December 1994:** two first-winter birds caught and examined in the hand, Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (Shigeta *et al.* 2002). Identification relied on the presence of 18 rectrices, with the outermost showing distinct barring (Shigeta *et al.* 2002), perhaps the only reliable characters to separate the species from Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala* and Pintail Snipe *G. stenura* (van Gils & Wiersma 2015).

Latham's Snipe breeds mainly in north Japan and is thought to winter in Australia, arriving July–September and remaining until mid-April (van Gils & Wiersma 2015). The lack of records during migration, including Taiwan where it is considered a rare transient (Ding *et al.* 2013), has led to the suggestion that the species migrates directly, although evidently identification problems may be a factor. The timing of the Philippine record suggests the birds were not on migration and it is possible that the species winters in small numbers in the Philippines (and elsewhere) but has gone unrecorded.

#### **Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus***

**7 and 13 January 2008:** an adult in non-breeding plumage was seen and photographed on 7 (FC) and 13 January (AL, CT) at Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon. Images showed a bold lower eye-crescent, dusky hood, very dark inner-web shading on the upperpart feathers, and strong barring on the flanks with heavy spotting near the vent—characteristic of the species. The bill shape was diagnostic, a fairly shallow base, uniformly narrow, tapering to a very narrow, flat tip. The Short-billed Dowitcher *L. griseus* has a variable bill, often with a proportionally thicker base, sometimes a kink near the tip, which appears thicker overall; it also has uniform thin eye-ring feathering of variable intensity, depending on the subspecies, and a relatively dark face (Lee & Birch 2006, K. Karlson *in litt.* 2014). The very dark central shafts of the upperpart feathers and tertials,

and the dark shadowing on the inner webs of many of these feathers, are a trait of Long-billed Dowitcher not shown by Short-billed in non-breeding plumage.

Four subsequent records: 9 January 2010, one at Barangay Pinagbayanan, San Juan, Batangas, Luzon, and singles at Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon, on 18 January 2011, 16 November 2013 and 27 December 2013.

Long-billed Dowitcher winters mainly on the west coast of North America to South America, but a few birds migrate further west and occur as rare migrants and winter visitors in Japan and Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013). All the Philippine records thus far have been in midwinter, suggesting that the birds were not on passage further south.

#### **Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos***

**10 October 2013:** a juvenile was photographed (PBo) at the International Rice Research Institute rice fields, Los Baños, Laguna, Luzon, (Plate 6). It was in fresh juvenile plumage with rich rufous fringes to the upperparts and white 'V' down the mantle and the upper two rows of scapulars. Separation from Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata* relied on underparts with solid streaking on the breast clearly demarcated from the unmarked belly and flanks, a very indistinct eye-ring, ear-coverts only slightly darker than the rest of the head, indistinct supercilium behind the eye, lack of distinct rufous crown, and a split supercilium when viewed head on. The bird's morphology was typical of Pectoral Sandpiper with slim body, long neck, long primary projection beyond the tertials and long bill, the latter with a green-brown base rather than the pinkish base of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

The Pectoral Sandpiper winters primarily in South America, but a few reach Australasia, passing through Japan and Korea, although not recorded south of Taiwan and Hong Kong on the South-East Asia coast (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013, van Gils *et al.* 2015). The species's occurrence in the Philippines had long been anticipated.

#### **[Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* (Critically Endangered)]**

**10 May 1996:** a record of two birds at Bicobian Bay, Divilican, Isabela, Luzon (Collar *et al.* 1999). The observers' field notes, originally stored at Haribon Foundation for Nature Conservation, Manila, cannot now be traced (N. A. Mallari and B. de la Paz *in litt.* 2014). Owing to the lack of documentation this species is no longer admitted to the Philippines list (WBCP 2014).]

#### **White Tern *Gygis alba***

**21 October 2004:** an adult about 28 km north-west of Bancoran Reef, San Miguel Islands, Tawi-Tawi (AEJ, AS, MTA, MLe). Shape and flight pattern identified it as a tern, with a slightly forked tail, uniform white body with no patterns present, but an obvious black eye-ring. Slightly upturned black bill, rather broad at the base which lacked any blue colouration suggested taxon *G. a. alba*. In company with two Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* and one Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, it was estimated to be about two-thirds the size of the Sooty Tern, with much shorter wings. In active flight it alternated between elegant tern-like flight and short periods of gliding; on one occasion it hovered low over the surface.

One subsequent record: 18 September 2012, an adult was found exhausted in a garden on Romblon Island, where it died the same day (Plate 7). The bluish base to the bill suggested this bird was taxon *G. a. candida*. The species's movements are poorly known (Gochfeld *et al.* 2015). Recorded as an accidental, usually storm-blown, visitor to Japan (Brazil 2009).

#### **Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla***

**4 February 2013:** An adult in breeding plumage, Balanga, Bataan, Luzon (ROH, ID; Plate 8). The combination of blood-red bill,



full black hood with white eye-crescents above and below the eye, dark-grey mantle which in flight contrasted with a broad white rear edge, and black wing-tips lacking white spots, eliminated any confusion species.

The first record of Laughing Gull in Asia was from Malaysia, 1 April 2000 (Tebb *et al.* 2003), with several subsequent records in Japan (Brazil 2009), and two records in Taiwan, November 2008 and February 2010 (Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*

**14 April 2014:** an adult in breeding plumage at Bucana Beach, Davao City, Davao del Sur, Mindanao (PS). The bird showed the full black hood, and a dark grey mantle contrasting with a broad white rear edge to the wing, which eliminated all confusion species except Laughing Gull *L. atricilla*. The latter was easily eliminated by the extensive white to the primary tips with black subterminal marking separated from the grey primary bases by a broad white band, and the broad white eye-crescents joined behind the eye.

Vagrants have previously been recorded from Japan and Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013) and China, where first found in September 2004 (Holt 2005).

#### Mew Gull *Larus canus*

**29 December 2013–5 January 2014:** a bird in first-winter plumage was at the mouth of the Laoag River, Ilocos Norte, Luzon (ROH, MKA, ID, RR, MT). Identification was aided by close views and detailed images (Plate 9). Direct comparison showed it was larger than Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* but smaller than Black-tailed Gull *L. crassirostris* and a presumed Slaty-backed Gull *L. schistisagus* in the same area. It had a neatly rounded head and a small, parallel-sided bill which was pink at the base with well-defined black tip. The head and underbody were white, but dusky streaking around the eye extended to the upper nape, with heavy brown blotching on the lower nape, breast and underparts as far as the flanks, and the undertail-coverts likewise had dark markings. The mantle was grey, contrasting with the brown-centred juvenile lesser and median wing-coverts, dark brown tertials and a paler bar across the greater wing-coverts; primaries black with narrower pale fringes. The tail showed a broad black band which extended inwards on the outer tail feathers. The uppertail-coverts showed extensive dark spotting. Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, the only likely confusion species, was eliminated by the very extensive black tail-band and bill structure.

The bird was confirmed to be subspecies *camtschatschensis*, which winters south to Japan, Korea, the east China coast and occasionally to Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013), by a combination of very dense brown blotching on the underparts, the underwing marked densely with brown, heavy brown marking on both the under- and uppertail-coverts and the very broad black tail-band (Olsen & Larsson 2004).

#### Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

**5 January 2014:** a bird in first-winter plumage was photographed on mudflats at Tibsoc, Negros Occidental (ROH, ID) (Plate 10). It was evidently one of the large white-headed gull taxa found in East Asia: *taimyrensis*, now subsumed in *L. fuscus heuglini* (Gill & Donsker 2014, Burger *et al.* 2015), *vegae*, *mongolicus* or *schistisagus*. The combination of slim build with long neck and long sloping bill, long slim legs and a long wing projection beyond the tail eliminated *schistisagus*, but supported *taimyrensis* as did the following plumage features—head and tail with extensive dark markings (unlike *mongolicus*, which moults early and would have a white head), grey scapulars with dark markings (*schistisagus* and *vegae* moults always more advanced by this date), coarse rusty-grey-toned markings to nape and upperparts (not typical for *vegae*), tertials and wing-coverts mostly dark with limited pale markings (unusually extensive pale

markings in *vegae*), dark primaries lacking the paler markings on the inner primaries (pattern never shown in *schistisagus* or *vegae*, which show contrast between inner and outer webs), dark bill with just a slight pinkish base where *mongolicus* and *vegae* would show extensive pale basally by this time (Olsen & Larsson 2004, N. Moores, K. M. Olsen & S. Mulkeen pers. comms.).

Although IOC (Gill & Donsker 2014), following Collinson *et al.* (2008), treat *taimyrensis* as part of *L. fuscus heuglini*, we are recording that this individual matched the proposed form *taimyrensis* (from the Yenisey and Taymyr Peninsula) in case of future taxonomic reviews.

#### Arctic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*

**2 April 2014:** one photographed at sea (SN), about 700 m off the north-east coast of Cagayan province, Luzon (18.430°N 122.285°E), was moulting into a pale intermediate first-summer plumage (Howell 2007). A slimmer, uniformly dark bill separated it from Pomarine Jaeger *S. pomarinus*, which has a two-tone bill, while structurally it was less barrel-chested and smaller-headed, with longer narrow wings with longer 'hand' than *pomarinus*. The extensive white on the underside of the newly moulted primaries eliminated Long-tailed Jaeger *S. longicaudus*, which also has a shorter, thicker bill (Olsen & Larsson 2013).

Rare off Korea, but regular off the east coast of Japan, Arctic Jaeger migrates through the Taiwan Strait during April–May (Brazil 2009), so the timing and location of this first record is consistent with this movement.

#### Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*

**30 March 2011:** one photographed (photographer unknown) at sea (18.832°N 121.822°E) during cetacean surveys 1.3 km west of Camiguin Norte, Babuyan Islands, Cagayan, Luzon (CAL). It was an adult in breeding plumage and, although a little distant, the images showed a slim jaeger with dark underwings and belly, contrasting with a whitish upper breast and projecting central rectrices equivalent in length to the tail. These features combine to eliminate all other jaeger species (Olsen & Larsson 2013).

On migration the species follows a similar pattern to Arctic Jaeger, with regular occurrence in the Taiwan Straits matching the time and location of this record.

#### Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

**21 May 2004:** a bird on Dalupiri Island, Cagayan, Luzon, was described by Allen *et al.* (2006). The species breeds in Myanmar, and occurs annually in Thailand (P. D. Round *in litt.* 2014). Although the species is an unlikely vagrant to the Philippines, there is a record of one on Iriomotejima, Ryukyu Islands, Japan, 1 June 1997 (Kamata 1997), and the first record for Singapore, 4 December 2013 (A. Low pers. comm. 2013).

#### Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

**19 February 2011:** an adult at Aborlan, Palawan (AT, JC), was readily identified by its huge size, a large grey bill, long wings in flight and long tail (Plate 11). Grey head and breast contrasting with white underparts and darker grey wings, with wing-coverts boldly tipped with black.

One subsequent record: 16 August 2013, a juvenile caught at Mount Dahu, Jolo, Sulu, was released the following day.

The birds almost certainly originate from Sulawesi, Indonesia, the most westerly population, about 900 km from Aborlan and 500 km from Jolo.

#### White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

**14 April 2009:** a bird at Subic Bay, Zambales, Luzon (PC, SP, SM, VA), was photographed (TS) and immediately identified as a needletail *Hirundapus* sp. It showed a well-defined white throat-



patch, which eliminated all confusion species including the resident Purple Needletail *H. celebensis*. The clear white forehead-patch confirmed it as the nominate form *caudacutus*.

Two subsequent records: 9 October 2012, three together, Cape San Agustin, Davao Oriental, Mindanao; 23 September 2013, one at Baracatan, Davao del Sur, Mindanao.

The nominate form is a long-distance migrant wintering in Australia and widely recorded on migration across China, South-East Asia and the east Indonesian islands (Chantler & Kirwan 2015). It would be expected to be a regular migrant though the Philippines in autumn and spring, although it may be overlooked due to confusion with resident Purple Needletail.

#### **Fairy Pitta *Pitta nympha* (Vulnerable)**

**30 September 2013:** an immature caught by a local fisherman, Pandanan, Malinsuno Island, Balabac, Palawan, and released the same day after being examined and photographed (RA, PW). It was distinguished from Blue-winged Pitta *P. moluccensis* by the chestnut head with black median stripe and pale-buffish supercilium, bright green upperparts with blue restricted to the lesser wing-coverts (Plate 12) and smaller white patch in the open wing on the outer five primaries (Lambert & Woodcock 1996). The species winters in Borneo, and a Philippine record is long overdue, given that it migrates to Taiwan (Lambert & Woodcock 1996).

#### **Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos***

**12 December 2004:** a male, Puerto Rivas, Balanga, Bataan, Luzon (AEJ, AB, LF, MLu, MV), was identified from the overall grey body plumage, lighter grey on the lower belly which contrasted with black wings and black tail. The tail, all black on the upperside, appeared to be graduated and each pair of visible feathers on the undertail had white oval patches towards the tip. It was estimated to be about 20% larger than an adjacent White-shouldered Starling *Sturnia sinensis*. Indochinese Cuckooshrike *C. polioptera* was eliminated owing to the lack of white edgings to wing feathers and less extensive white markings on the undertail, while Lesser Cuckooshrike *C. fimbriata* would appear much smaller, with white tips on the undertail.

One subsequent record: 12 January 2008, one at Subic Bay, Zambales, Luzon, only 32 km north-west of the first record.

This migratory species visits much of China in summer, wintering in India and South-East Asia. Subspecies *intermedia*, which breeds in central, east and south-east China, occurs annually in Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### **Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus***

**30 September 2001:** an immature bird, Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (THF, JM, SMi). Field notes described a bird with an elongated, deeply forked tail, strong short beak and rounded head, all black (without the bright blue gloss of the resident Balicassiao *D. balicassius*), with a dirty-white lower belly, grey-brown flecking and a few light bars on the vent. The bird was similar in size to Balicassiao although longer and more slender.

Five subsequent records: 3 February 2008, adult, Trece Martirez, Cavite, Luzon; 11 October 2009, an adult, Consuelo, Masantol, Pampanga, Luzon; 15 November 2009, two immatures which remained until January 2010, with one lingering until March 2010, International Rice Research Institute, Los Banos, Laguna, Luzon; 8 October 2013, an adult, Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique; 16 October 2013, one (not aged), Basco, Batan Island, Batanes.

The species is resident in much of South Asia, South-East Asia and south China, including the form *harterti* endemic to Taiwan, geographically the nearest population (Brazil 2009). However, taxon *D. m. cathoecus*, which breeds in east and central China, is a passage migrant in Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013) and probably the source of the Philippine records.

#### **Japanese Waxwing *Bombycilla japonica* (Near Threatened)**

**31 March 2013:** a bird photographed (VMB) at Basco, Batanes, was immediately identified as a waxwing *Bombycilla* sp. and was distinguished from Bohemian Waxwing *B. garrulus* by the red rather than yellow tail-tip and the broad black mask through the eye continuing to the back of the crest.

Winter stragglers reach the Ryukyu Islands and Taiwan (Brazil 2009). The period from December 2012 to March 2013 was exceptionally cold in most of the usual wintering range, and the harsh weather may have pushed the species further south.

#### **Asian Stubtail *Urosphena squameiceps***

**9 October 1999:** the full description of a bird caught at Sibaliw, Tagosip, Buruanga, Aklan, Panay, was published by Curio *et al.* (2001).

One subsequent record: 7 March 2006, a specimen (Kansas University Natural History Museum 97265) collected in secondary forest, Limandok, Camiguin Norte, Babuyan Islands, Cagayan, Luzon (Oliveros *et al.* 2008).

The species winters in south Japan, east China, Myanmar, Thailand and Indochina (Brazil 2009). A regular migrant through Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013), occurrence in the Philippines is not unexpected and it is probably under-recorded due to its secretive habits.

#### **Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus***

**15 October 2006:** one or possibly two individuals at Mount Mariveles watershed, Bataan, Luzon (JH, DBr). A rather plain *Phylloscopus* sp. lacking wing-bars and with few distinguishing features (Plate 13), the combination of dull green-grey upperparts, greyish-white underparts with yellow wash to the breast-sides and vent, dark eye-stripe, and yellowish supercilium eliminated most confusion species, and the dark horn-coloured legs, blackish-brown bill with pinkish base, and long primary projection were additional features to separate it from Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita tristis*.

Although the species winters in Africa, it is a rare, probably annual, migrant from September to November in Japan and has also occurred in Korea (Brazil 2009).

#### **Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus***

**1 November 1994:** one on Batan Island, Batanes (THF). Field notes reported a long yellowish-tinged supercilium, appearing slightly upturned behind the eyes, a slightly paler, not well-contrasted mesial crown-stripe and two distinctive broad white wing-bars, generally olive-brown upperparts and pale underparts with off-white throat, chin and undertail-coverts and a slight grey wash on upper breast; bill with pale base to the lower mandible. The distinctive upward-inflected call of the species was also well described. The combination of these features eliminates all possible confusion species (P. D. Round pers. comm. 2014) including Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus*, Two-banded Warbler *P. plumbeitarsus* and the three recently separated taxa, Arctic Warbler *P. borealis*, Kamchatka Leaf Warbler *P. examinandus* and Japanese Leaf Warbler *P. xanthodryas* (Alström *et al.* 2011).

Four subsequent records: 1 November 2010, Mt Data, Mountain province, Luzon; 12 February 2012, Bangkong-Kahoy, Mt Banahaw, Quezon province, Luzon; 30 November 2013, Camp John Hay, Baguio, Luzon; and 12 January 2014, Sawa Camp, Cagayan, Luzon.

A record of a *Phylloscopus* warbler caught, examined in-hand and photographed in Alcoy Forest, Cebu, 25 January 2003, and published as a possible Yellow-browed Warbler record (Paguntalan & Jakosalem 2008), is now considered to be one of the 'Arctic Warbler' taxa: *P. borealis*, *examinandus* or *xanthodryas* (Alström *et al.* 2011); these are common migrants to the Philippines (Kennedy *et al.* 2000). Yellow-browed Warbler was eliminated by the lack of pale tips and edges to the tertials, lack of emargination on the sixth



primary (Svensson 1992), and active wing moult which is normal for *P. borealis* on its wintering grounds but not for *P. inornatus* which completes a post-nuptial moult on the breeding grounds before migration (P. D. Round pers. comm. 2014).

Yellow-browed Warbler winters widely in South-East Asia and is an uncommon winter visitor in Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013); vagrants are also recorded from Borneo (Myers 2009).

#### **Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps***

**24 and 27 April 2008:** two birds, one of which was mist-netted (PDR, AB, JH, THF) at Barangay Visal, San Pablo, Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (Round & Fisher 2009).

One subsequent record, 16 March 2009, only 400 m from the 2008 record (Round & Fisher 2009).

Black-browed Reed Warbler is a common winter visitor in south-east China and throughout South-East Asia, with smaller numbers wintering in Taiwan (Brazil 2009).

#### **Daurian Starling *Agropsar sturninus***

**22 October 1978:** a small flock feeding on the ground at Port Barton, Palawan (THF). An adult male was described: blackish wings and tail, white patch on the wing-coverts, white underparts, greyish wash on head and throat, and a diagnostic dark patch on the back of the nape.

Two subsequent records: 26 October 1991, two, North Islet, Tubbataha Reefs, Cagayancillo, Palawan, 8 November 2008, two (one photographed), Sta Filomena, Alegria, Cebu.

The species winters mainly in Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore (ROH pers. obs.) and is recorded on passage in east China and much of South-East Asia. Records also from Taiwan and islands off Korea and Japan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### **Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus***

**10 May 2009:** an adult in non-breeding plumage, South Islet, Tubbataha Reefs, Cagayancillo, Palawan (AEJ, THF, photographed by MKC). A typical starling with a pinkish bill and legs; about 18–20 cm long, with black cap and a slight crest, the rest of the head, throat, upper breast, nape, primaries, secondaries and the slightly notched tail brownish black. Lower breast, belly and upperparts including wing-coverts greyish-brown; darker on the flanks. Dark centres to feathers on the grey undertail-coverts and lower flanks gave a diagnostic vermiculated effect.

Two subsequent records: 26 June 2012, an adult, Banca-Banca, Puerto Princesa, Palawan (Plate 14), and 29 October 2012, an adult, Dumagat, Iloilo, Panay.

The species winters predominantly in South Asia, but is very nomadic and subject to periodic eruptions which take it to South-East and East Asia with previous accidental records from Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### **Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***

**8 February 2007:** an adult in non-breeding plumage photographed at Iwahig Penal Colony, Puerto Princesa, Palawan (RO). The bird was unmistakable, black plumage with metallic purple and green sheen, particularly on head and neck, small white spotting on head becoming large and distinct on the underparts and buff spots on the upperparts.

Two subsequent records: 11 November 2013, an adult, Bagamanoc, Catanduanes, Luzon, and 17–23 December 2014, a flock of at least 20 at Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Luzon.

In East Asia the taxon *poltaratskyi* is a scarce winter visitor to coastal China, south Japan, Korea and Taiwan (Brazil 2009).

#### **Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica***

**16 February 2012:** a male collected on Mt Cetaceo, Cagayan, Luzon (DB) during a field expedition of the Field Museum of

Natural History (FMNH), Chicago, USA (FMNH 480631), was identified as the nominate form *sibirica*.

The species is a scarce passage migrant in Korea and Hong Kong, and an occasional visitor to Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013).

#### **Common Blackbird *Turdus merula***

**30 November 2007:** a male, probably subspecies *mandarinus*, Sabang, Puerto Princesa, Palawan (THF). The same bird was probably involved in two subsequent sightings at the same location—early February 2008 (SW) and 8 April 2008 (ROH). The all-black plumage, contrasting with a bright orange bill, thin orange eye-ring and dark legs, eliminated all other thrush species (including the unlikely possibility of the high-altitude Island Thrush *T. poliocephalus*).

Subspecies *mandarinus* of south and south-east China has occurred in Japan, Korea and Taiwan (Brazil 2009). Typhoon Lando, which passed through the Philippines between 19–22 November 2007, before returning from the Asian mainland across the West Philippine Sea to the north of Palawan between 26–28 November, may have been responsible for the bird's arrival on Palawan.

#### **Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus***

**28 January 2013:** two males photographed on Basco, Batan Island, Batanes (RU), and described in Urriza (2013).

#### **Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica***

**20–21 February 2003:** a male, Bislig Airport, Surigao del Sur, Mindanao (MBa, CGE, ML, HM, DS), was estimated to be about the size of a European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. Plumage was brown overall with a distinct white eyebrow and a large blue throat-patch, with a red spot at the centre and a red horizontal stripe below. In flight it showed a distinctive tail pattern with a broad black terminal band and two rusty red spots at the base. The throat feathers were a mixture of bright and dull colours, suggesting a moult from winter to summer plumage.

The species is a common winter visitor and spring passage migrant in east China and an occasional migrant or winter visitor in Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013); accidental records in the Philippines are to be expected.

#### **Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus***

**10 May 2004:** a female caught and photographed on Calayan Island, Cagayan, Luzon, was documented by Allen *et al.* (2006).

The species is a common migrant through East Asia, wintering in south Japan, south Korea, east China, Taiwan and South-East Asia (Brazil 2009). This record, presumably a bird straying east of the usual route north, is not surprising and further records in the Philippines should be anticipated.

#### **Stejneger's Stonechat *Saxicola (maurus) stejnegeri***

**17–18 November 2007:** a first winter or non-breeding adult male was photographed (Plate 15), University of the Philippines campus, Diliman, Quezon City, Luzon (AV, DCa, RO). It showed well-defined, almost checkered pattern of black-brown centres and rich warm brown fringes to the upperparts with no visible white except at feather-bases on the uppertail-coverts. Underparts were warm ochraceous-orange, prominent on the breast and flanks. Black feather-bases on the throat and pointed tail feathers suggested a first-winter male *stejnegeri* (Birding Frontiers 2012a,b, P. Clement *in litt.* 2013). A broad base to the bill, warm ochraceous underparts and restricted white on the rump helped rule out *maurus* (Moore 2012) and the identification was confirmed by a prominent dark mark on the uppertail-coverts. This mark is visible on about half of the male *stejnegeri* observed in South Korea and is thought to be diagnostic when present (M. Hellström *in litt.* 2013, M. Garner *in litt.* 2014, N. Moore *in litt.* 2013). Genetic studies (Zink *et al.*



2009) have shown that the east Asian form *stejnegeri* is robustly genetically distinct from *maurus* and may merit full species status (see Gill & Donsker 2014). This insight contradicts earlier authors (e.g. Urquhart 2002) who questioned the validity of *stejnegeri*.

One subsequent confirmed record: 30 April 2014, a first-winter or non-breeding adult male, Itbayat, Batanes. Three other records (four individuals), insufficiently documented to differentiate between *stejnegeri* and *maurus*, were as follows: 24 February 1999, one thought to be a non-breeding plumage female, Sabang, Puerto Princesa, Palawan; 14–15 March 2001, one presumed non-breeding female or first-winter male and one non-breeding male, Sabang, Puerto Princesa, Palawan; 26 August 2007, one Anvaya Cove, Morong, Bataan.

The taxon *stejnegeri* is widely distributed in East Asia; it is common and presumably the only regularly occurring stonechat in the Korean Peninsula (N. Moores *in litt.* 2013). It breeds in east Siberia to Anadyrland, south to east Mongolia, north-east China, Korea and Japan, wintering in south China, Taiwan and South-East Asia (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013, Collar 2015).

#### Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia*

**22 October 1999:** a female or first-winter male, Puerto Princesa, Palawan (RF, RC). The upperparts were olive-brown with slightly darker head, no eyebrow but with a partial white eye-ring, and a clearly defined yellow rump contrasting with a blackish tail. The dark olive-brown wings had pale tips to three greater coverts forming a broken wing-bar. The underparts were washed dull yellow with some dusky mottling on the throat and breast. The only other flycatchers with a yellow rump are male Green-backed Flycatcher *F. elisae*, which has brighter yellow underparts and strong yellow lores, and a male *owstoni* taxon Narcissus Flycatcher *F. narcissina*, which would show a striking combination of black upperparts and wings, white wing-slash, bright yellow underparts and long yellow supercilium (Brazil 2009).

Yellow-rumped Flycatcher breeds in Korea and east and north-east China, and winters on the Malay Peninsula south to Sumatra, Indonesia (Robson 2005, Brazil 2009). It is an occasional passage migrant to Taiwan (Ding *et al.* 2013). A record on Palawan, slightly east of its usual migration route, is not unexpected.

#### Pin-tailed Parrotfinch *Erythrura prasina*

**4 May 1983:** a male, Philippine Copper Mining Corporation camp, Puerto Princesa, Palawan (TC, IW). The bird, in bamboo scrub at forest edge, had green upperparts, with red rump, red tail with long, pointed central feathers, blue throat, forehead and face with a small black eye-mask, lower breast and belly-sides orange-buff, with bright red centres. From the description, it appeared to be the more colourful taxon *coelica* known only from Borneo (Myers 2009).

Three specimens were subsequently collected in June and July 2007 by FMNH between 1,100 and 1,750 m on Mt Mantalingahan, Rizal, Palawan: 30 June 2007, FMNH 455088, at Paray-paray, 2 km west and 0.7 km south of Mt Mantalingahan; 7 July 2007, FMNH 455089, Gunob, 3.4 km west and 0.6 km south of Mt Mantalingahan; 10 July 2007, FMNH 455090, a female, also thought to be *coelica*, Mt Kawayan, 4.75 km west and 1.3 km south of Mt Mantalingahan, photographed by Garcia (<https://samutsaringbuhay.wordpress.com/2007/09/16/spectacular-wildlife-finds-in-mt-mantalingahan-palawan/>). Both the nominate form and *coelica* are known to be nomadic, following rice harvests and seeding bamboo (Myers 2009). It is unclear whether these birds represent occasional visitors from Borneo or a little-known resident population.

#### Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

**6 April 2012:** a male, Candaba Marsh, Pampanga, Luzon (MW). Identified from the bright yellow head and underparts, broad white tips to median and greater wing-coverts forming broad wing-bars,

black tertials with broad white fringes and a grey mantle which confirmed that the bird was the nominate subspecies. An olive-grey wash to the nuchal band extending up the nape to the rear crown suggested first-summer plumage (Alström & Mild 2003).

Eastern populations winter in south and south-east China (Alström & Mild 2003, Brazil 2009). A scarce migrant in Korea, Japan and Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013), occurrence in the Philippines is not unexpected.

#### Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

**15 October 2013:** a first-winter bird (Plate 16) on Basco airfield, Batan Island, Batanes (ROH, ID), was identified by a suite of characters including overall buffier colouration, larger size with robust body, long tail, long stout legs and a distinctive upright stance, in direct comparison with Paddyfield Pipit *A. rufulus*. The bill was strong and stout, thick at the base, noticeably curving down to tip. The call was a strong *shree-ep*. All the median coverts on each wing had already been moulted to adult feathers and the patterning of these, with pointed rather than square darker brown centres, a definitive identification feature, confirmed that it was Richard's rather than Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii* (Alström & Mild 2003, Tyler 2004).

The species winters in south and south-east China, Taiwan and South-East Asia (Alström & Mild 2003, Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013). Although *A. richardi* was listed as a winter visitor to the Philippines (Tyler 2004) this was probably due to the earlier inclusion of the resident taxon *lugubris* in *A. novaeseelandiae* before separation of *A. rufulus* in which it is now placed. Neither Dickinson *et al.* (1991) nor Kennedy *et al.* (2000) included evidence of the occurrence of *A. richardi* and this is considered the first *de facto* record.

#### Chinese Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria*

**12 October 1991:** a female on Sabtang Island, Batanes (THF, RT), was described as a rather large grosbeak with a massive, deep yellow bill, black lores, overall grey-brown colour, paler and more mottled on the underparts, white vent and black tail. The black secondaries and primaries with white tips produced a characteristic white band at the trailing edge of the wing which, together with a white carpal spot, was seen well in flight.

The taxon *migratoria* winters in south Japan, east China and occasionally Taiwan (Brazil 2009, Ding *et al.* 2013). Occurrence of the species in Batanes, just south of Taiwan, was not unexpected.

#### Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

**17 February 1996:** one at Iwahig, Puerto Princesa, Palawan (THF, PM), was described from detailed field notes as a rather nondescript bunting with sandy-brown upperparts, pale-buff underparts with a grey suffusion and faint streaking across the breast, two indistinct wing-bars and a lack of distinctive head markings. This reduced the possibilities to Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps* or Black-headed Bunting, often very difficult to separate. However, the bird showed clear streaking on the crown, a large heavy bill and a distinct contrast between the ear-coverts and the paler moustachial area, all features that exclude *E. bruniceps* (Brazil 2009).

One subsequent record: 1–23 March 2014, a male, Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Luzon.

Although Black-headed Bunting winters in South Asia, there are at least 21 other records in South-East and East Asia, including Japan, China, Thailand, Laos, Taiwan and Sabah, Borneo.

## DISCUSSION

Dickinson *et al.* (1991) noted about 170 migratory species for the Philippines, and Kennedy *et al.* (2000) listed as rare and accidental 62 species with fewer than 20 documented records. The



54 new species recorded here fall into several different categories. Thirteen species are passerines which breed in north-east Asia and normally migrate south to winter in South-East Asia: Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Black Drongo, Asian Stubtail, Yellow-browed Warbler, Black-browed Reed Warbler, Daurian Starling, Siberian Thrush, Bluethroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Stejneger's Stonechat, Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Citrine Wagtail and Richard's Pipit. These species typically set out in relatively clear, stable conditions associated with high-pressure systems, ideal for migration and navigation (Elkins 1999). However, the frequent low-pressure systems which track across the vicinity of the Philippines between August and October bring high winds and heavy cloud, leading migrants to become disoriented over the open sea and causing them to land at the first opportunity (Lees & Gilroy 2009), often on isolated islands like the Batanes and Babuyan Islands in the Philippine Sea and islets in the Sulu Sea; in fact 17 of the new records are from these island groups. Another five passerines—Japanese Waxwing, Common Starling, Common Blackbird, Dusky Thrush and Chinese Grosbeak—winter in parts of East Asia adjacent to the Philippines and might be driven to the Philippines either by bad weather during migration or by persistent cold weather in winter.

Twelve species can be considered to be wetland birds and nine of these—Bean Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Tundra Swan, Ruddy Shelduck, Mandarin Duck, Oriental Stork, Eurasian Spoonbill, Dalmatian Pelican and Northern Lapwing—are regular wintering species in south and east China or Taiwan and also probably occur in the Philippines as a result of overshooting their regular wintering areas, in some cases owing to inclement weather. Both Long-billed Dowitcher and Pectoral Sandpiper have breeding ranges which extend well into eastern Asia and it might be that East Asia, including the Philippines, is a regular migration route for these species. Another wetland species, Latham's Snipe, as well as Eurasian Hobby, White-throated Needletail and Fairy Pitta, breed to the north of the Philippines, wintering to the south, and are most likely regular migrants, albeit currently under-recorded.

Eight pelagic species—Laysan Albatross, Short-tailed Shearwater, Swinhoe's Storm Petrel, Leach's Storm Petrel, Christmas Island Frigatebird, White Tern, Arctic Jaeger and Long-tailed Jaeger—and four coastal species—Laughing Gull, Franklin's Gull, Mew Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull—have been recorded, and further pelagic exploration would surely add to the avifauna.

The increase in the number of skilled amateur birdwatchers, bird photographers and professional ornithologists has contributed significantly to the knowledge of the Philippine avifauna. Of the species recorded here, 36 were reported by amateur birdwatchers, eight by scientists during their fieldwork, and four initially by local citizens to the DENR.

The records are from 42 different localities spread across the country—from Bancau Reef in Tawi-Tawi province near the Malaysian border in the south-west to Batanes province in the extreme north. However, most amateur birdwatchers frequent the same few localities and two of the most popular areas, a small wetland near Candaba Town in what remains of the former Candaba Marsh, Luzon, and Puerto Princesa, Palawan, produced 20 new species records, a clear indication that much of the Philippines remains ornithologically under-studied.

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